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## **Jesuits Run Radical Rock Station At Lmu June 24, 1987 | STEVE WEINSTEIN**

It is not surprising that the only radio station in Los Angeles that would play songs entitled "Locust Abortion Technician" or "The Catholics Are Attacking" is one run entirely by students at a local university. What does seem curious, though, is that KXLU-FM (88.9), L.A.'s one true champion of underground rock music, is owned and financed by the Jesuit priests at Loyola Marymount University.

"It does seem bizarre," says Mark Morris, 23, who was general manager until he graduated last month. "The Jesuits have always shown a lot of tolerance. Although this music may seem out of place, they respect that we do such a good job."

The students who keep KXLU on the air, some working up to 50 hours a week without pay and without college credit, believe their job is to provide Los Angeles listeners with a radical, often perverse alternative to the repetitive, pre-programmed sound that characterizes most commercial music stations in this city.

The rock format is operative from 2 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays, and during their three-hour shifts, student disc jockeys are free to play any combination of what they call "thrash music, punk rock, speed metal, art damage, industrial jazz, surf music" by bands called Thatcher on Acid, Bulimia Banquet and Half Man Half Biscuit--anything that suits their fancy at that particular moment.

"I would find it hard to believe that there are many fans of this music up there in the administration," says Judy Puckett-Borunda, KXLU's faculty adviser. "But the Jesuit tradition is one of open learning and support of anything that will help a person grow."

University officials, who point out that the station is not exclusively a rock-music outlet, speak with great pride about the station's innovation and the loyalty and excitement it generates among its listeners. KXLU raised nearly \$50,000 from listener subscriptions this year, and annually wins the university award for the best-run student organization on campus. KXLU has also been honored consistently as one of the top college radio stations in the country.

"There isn't anything quite like it," says Tom Reynolds, associate dean of students. "If you look around, there isn't any creativity in L.A. radio. No one is out there doing anything unique except KXLU."

It angers Reynolds that outsiders like to view KXLU as an ongoing battle between a few punk, eccentric students at Loyola and an uptight, conservative Jesuit administration. The truth, he says, is that the Jesuits at Loyola are neither uptight nor conservative.

"Once in a while the students are careless and they get reined in," Reynolds says. "We realize that these are college students and they will make mistakes. But our job is to work with them to solve any problems, not to kick them out the door."

The students who run the station say that they have always been careful to censor themselves so that the university won't step in and meddle with their format. Records that contain obscene lyrics are clearly marked with warnings to keep them off the air, and memos containing FCC obscenity regulations, especially in the wake of the FCC's recent reprimand of the station at UC Santa Barbara, are posted all over the walls of KXLU's studios.

It has been more than two years since any student was punished for violating the station's self-imposed obscenity standards. And the students rejoice that the university has never banned any record nor interfered with the station's programming in any way.

But while the Jesuits maintain this hands-off attitude and continue to contribute \$20,000 each year to the station's operating budget, the style, attitudes and musical tastes of the more than 100 students who operate the station do not mirror the majority of Loyola's student body.

"The people who don't fit in at Loyola, the ones who are not part of the fraternity and sorority scene, work here," says Tricia Pistay, 23, KXLU's program director. "We're considered the freaks, the social rejects. This is our little haven."

Pistay says that KXLU works only because everyone there has a passion for the music. Most people dismiss it as "joke music," but, Pistay insists, most of them have never had the chance to listen to it. She laments that they have been trained to feel safe only when they get their three Madonna songs and five McDonald's commercials every hour.

"So if we don't take the chance, no one else will. We're here to support struggling artists. To give them that extra inspiration to keep going. And our influence, and our audience's influence, is to force the other stations to wake up. The size and enthusiasm of our audience will hopefully force them to open up to these bands."

Some bands that KXLU claims to have introduced to the public back when commercial stations unanimously spurned their harsh or eccentric sound--groups that include X, the Go-Go's, Oingo Boingo and even the overtly commercial Duran Duran--have catapulted to stardom and more than their share of air play on commercial radio.

"We're proud of that," says Hassan Alamdari, 21, a math major and the current general manager of KXLU. "But we have to move on to someone new. Our purpose is not to change anything, but simply to have the chance to play the music that we love."

And, according to Borunda, who has been the station's faculty adviser for the past two years, the audience loves it too. "Lawyers, yuppies, students, all kinds of people donate money to the station and call up to say thanks for giving them something to listen to. You don't have to dye your hair red or

wear an earring to work here or to like what we play. The students are really giving their listeners a new and welcomed experience."

Though KXLU is known mostly for its rock programs, it was founded 30 years ago as a classical station, and it still broadcasts five hours of Puccini operas and Beethoven sonatas every weeknight. KXLU also airs a bilingual, Latin music program called "Alma del Barrio" on weekends. Student sportscasters call the play-by-play for all Loyola basketball games, and the late-evening hours are filled with specialty shows that feature everything from jazz and reggae music to contemporary poetry and sociopolitical discussions.

"The university likes the fact that there is something for everyone," Alamdari says. "The only thing we don't have is a game show."

Nor do they have anyone who dresses like Vanna White. But they do have plenty of dedicated broadcasters who leave college with up to five years of real experience managing a radio station.

Most, however, never pursue a career in radio once they graduate. (Alamdari says he'll probably attend grad school, majoring in math.) In the real world, passion, innovation and free-form radio shows, they say, have mostly been exterminated by programming consultants expert only in demographic trends. Out there, the students mourn, they will never find another KXLU.